

IP Relay Service

FCC Consumer Facts

Background

Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) permits persons with a hearing or speech disability to use the telephone system via a text telephone (TTY) or other device. Now TRS users are only a mouse click away from a new TRS option. All they need is an Internet connection and they can use Internet Protocol (IP) Relay.

How IP Relay Service Works

IP Relay allows people who have difficulty hearing or speaking to communicate with anyone in the world through an Internet connection. IP Relay is accessed using a computer and the Internet, rather than a TTY and a telephone. So individuals who use IP Relay do not need to invest in a TTY; they simply use the computer to communicate. When conversing over IP Relay, people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have difficulty speaking can participate in a conference call or go online while holding a conversation.

Unlike traditional TRS, where a TTY user contacts a TRS center via telephone lines and the communication assistant (CA) at the TRS center calls the receiving party via voice telephone, the first leg of an IP Relay call goes from the caller's computer, or other Web-enabled device, to the IP Relay Center via the Internet. The IP Relay Center is usually accessed via a Web page. The second leg of the call, as with traditional TRS, is from the CA to the receiving party via voice telephone through the public switched telephone network. The CA can also accept IP relay calls from persons with hard-to-understand speech and repeat the calls in an easily understandable form for the called party.

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There are no additional costs to consumers for IP Relay beyond a computer or other Web-capable device and an Internet connection. All IP Relay service providers' costs are recoverable from the interstate TRS Fund.

Benefits of IP Relay

There are several consumer benefits of IP Relay:

- **Availability** – IP Relay is available to anyone who has access to the Internet via a computer, personal digital assistant (PDA), Web-capable telephone, or other device.
- **Convenience** – Consumers do not need to go to a separate TTY or log off the Internet to use a TTY telephone line. IP Relay lets consumers make relay calls even when there is no TTY handy. In addition, consumers often say that using a computer screen and keyboard is easier than using a TTY. IP Relay permits much faster typing and allows users to see much more of the conversation on their computer screens than they can see with a TTY LCD window. IP Relay also allows users to print out and save conversations.

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- **Multiple Calls** – IP Relay users can initiate multiple calls simultaneously, make conference calls, or browse the Internet while making a call.
- **Quality** – Transmission quality may be faster via IP Relay than via a TTY.
- **Multivendoring** – Like users of most other telecommunications services, IP Relay users can choose among any of the relay providers and are not limited to their state's selected relay providers. Relay vendors are selected on the basis of their quality assurances and their service features, rather than solely on their costs. Providers compete for consumers.

Where to Go for Additional Information and Assistance

For information on other IP Relay service issues, you can visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau's Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro.

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